

YOUNG MAN SAID UNKIND THINGS ABOUT GEORGE WASHINGTON—REPENTS IN JAIL

Tacoma, Wash., Feb. 22. — While the nation is today celebrating Washington's birthday, Paul Haffer, a young Socialist, lies in jail here for "defaming" the memory of the first president.

It is among the strangest libel cases in American history.

Haffer publicly asserted that Washington had been intemperate,



Paul Haffer.

swore like a trooper and was a slave owner.

A six months' prison sentence, solemnly approved by the state supreme court, was the outcome.

Haffer's motive, he explained was "to check the unthinking idolatry of heroes held up as demi-gods before the public."

But when Col. Albert Joab, an elderly attorney, haled him into court

under a statute making it unlawful to slander deceased persons, even though they have no living relatives, the Socialist was unable to substantiate his accusations by historic documents.

The jury's verdict created widespread surprise. Few people even know of the existence of such law, though it is on the books of many states.

Haffer's case, with its comprehensive precedent, makes it dangerous to include in criticism of national heroes, even though they may have died a hundred years ago.

Iconoclasts must have the FACTS before they can with impunity begin smashing pedestals.

Col. Joab's late defense of Washington's memory, 185 years after his birth, contrasts oddly with the soldier-statesman's own broad tolerance and lack of hero worship.

"George Washington lives in the hearts of his countrymen," was Joab's explanation, "and no one is going to defame his memory while I am alive to resent it."

And a jury helped Joab keep the "Father of His Country's" great name untarnished.

So—if you don't really believe the story about Washington and the little red hatchet, the story that he NEVER lied like other mortals, you'd better keep the doubt to yourself.

Otherwise you might find yourself in Haffer's boots.

WHY HAFER DID IT

"I merely wanted to show that George Washington was human—not entirely without mortal faults, as unthinking idolators would have us believe.

"And in making my assertions I was repeating only what I had read from time to time. I was unable to find these references during my trial, however."